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POEMS



P O E M S

BY

ALEXANDER BLAIR THAW



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A. B. T.

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WITH BURNING HEARTS

WITH burning hearts for ever we aspire
To pour love's precious metal, like pure gold,
Within the lips of life's immortal mould.
And though our hands have shaken with desire,
And spilled some drops, and failed to make entire
The perfect image ; even so, behold,
We are Life's artisans ! The world were cold
But that our hearts have burned with such a fire.

And since for beauty's sake my soul hath burned,
Though I the perfect mould may never fill,
Yet shall I feed that fire, with fire, until,
When the great master's hand hath overturned
The clay, perchance in these poor drops I spill
Shall be my hope ; and I may not be spurned.

WHEN CHAOS DWELT ON EARTH

WHEN chaos dwelt on earth, a mighty god
Was born ; an infant god and blind. No gleam
Of light was there ; and darkly, as a dream,
Did life appear, and fearful shapes that trod
One on another down into the sod,
Whence others rose, a never-ending stream.
And still great Love is blind, and life doth seem
To come and go, while he, asleep, doth nod.

But lo ! that infant god who seemeth blind,
He only from vain dreaming shall awake
A wondering world. Oh, must we strive to break
These bonds, whereby our vision is confined,
Yet many weary years ;—or simply take
The word of Love for all that lies behind ?

TO THE GREAT GOD PAN

THOU ancient one of earth, thou god of all

Who breathe, hear thou our cry ! Upon this crust

Of crumbling earth we lie, as we were thrust,

All naked, forth. On thy dark world we fall ;

Around thine altar, infant-like, we crawl.

Come forth from out thy groves ! Surely, thou
must !

We cannot see ; our eyes are filled with dust,—

We hearken, trembling, for thine answering call.

We are but mortal, made of this bare mould

Whereon we live, and die, and make our moan ;—

Which thou hast heard, and on thy pipes hast blown

Faint answering sounds ! Thy voice, now, as of old,

Though seeming but an echo of our own,

Remotest secrets of thy heart hath told.

TIME

TIME is the mighty master of us all:

Upon his coming and his going wait

Love, and swift death, and day and night,—and
fate.

Princes and flowers before his sickle fall,

Who round kings' gardens builds a prison wall;

Beggars by him are brought to high estate:

And his alone the skill to modulate

Life's broken stops to measures musical.

So Life's true singers shall of Time go free,

His minstrels, over all the world to range,

Till they shall find, past waters deep and strange,

Their native land, and that pure liberty,—

Last born of the quick womb of time and change,—

Whose breath is life's alternate harmony.

TO HOMER

BLIND singer of the world's desire,
Thy world is ours. Thy song Troy town
Built, burned; and then thy lyre
Burst in a blaze of fire
Seas shall not drown.

First kindled in a woman's eyes,
Fire burned high Troy; and beckoned men
From home; and from the skies
The gods. Those flames yet rise,
Yea, now as then.

Yea, now as then, the world's desire,
Though hidden from us, still doth dwell
In Helen's heart of fire,
And breathes upon thy lyre
Her mighty spell.

Against new gods we wage our wars,
New cities build or burn with fire;
And still, beneath the stars,
We beat against the bars
Of blind desire.

Our world is thine. New wars we wage
Under old skies. Our richest wine
Hath savour of thine age:
We write on life's last page;—
The book was thine.

Of life's brave book the leaves are turned,
And as we read we wonder how
Thy blinded eyes discerned
Life's hidden fires,—that burned
Even then as now.

Oh thou who first, when earth was young,
Sang fate defied and mortals slain,
Upon that honeyed tongue
How sweet thy songs, though sung
Of mortal pain!

What songs have we thou dost not sing,
What fates thy heart hath not foretold?
Breathe thou the songs we bring!
Bees on thy mouth still cling,
Now, as of old.

LOVE'S QUICKENING FIRE

By the strange virtue of love's quickening fire,
Life's early visions, lost and long forgot,
In forms material are born,—begot
Of one swift burning moment of desire,
Beauty's first-born to Love ; nor shall expire
As do earth's children ; nay, and they shall not
Within the fatal urn of Time be caught,
Till earth's last singer break the deathless lyre.

Conceived in ecstasy ethereal,
Begot of passion that swift perisheth,
And born of the warm earth, one subtle breath,
Suspiring from this source material,
Leaps to the sun on wings aerial,
And through love's fire escapes the night of death.

THE SILENT HEART

A BALLADE

UPON what mortal lips this air hath stirred,—
This air we breathe in laughter or with sighs,—
In what immortal strains, or with what word
Of life, that dies not though the sweet song dies !
Though the bright morning stars in the still skies
Stay their sweet singing, sphere answering sphere,
Hush !—from the world's deep heart doth ever rise
That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

How long the stars for all the ages hurled
Silent through space, while yet no mortal tongue
Had told the secrets that the murmuring world
Whispered her many children, as they clung

Close to her bosom ! Ye whom fate hath flung
Prostrate upon the ground ! Oh ye with ear
Pressed close to earth, what music thence hath
sprung !

That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

Beyond the sound of waters, when the sea
Beats with a ceaseless thunder on the shore ;—
And, with unmeaning moan, eternally
The senseless passion of his life shall roar,
Raging in froth and foam, and evermore
Make hollow sound ;—hark, to the listening ear
Sweet siren voices on the wide air pour
That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

Though these were songs no man might hear, and
live,

What then ! Shall you, by fear of death deterred,

Seek death in life ! Oh ye, who dare to give
Life and the world, to catch one strain, unheard,
Of more than mortal music ; which hath stirred
Men's hearts, beyond life's hope, or death's dark
fear !

The world awaiteth still that magic word,
That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

Ye who, with silent hearts, shall venture where
Those siren songs your very souls beguile,
Shall not that spell, flung on the breathless air
By lovely lips that sing and ever smile,
Be very breath of life ? Oh, reconcile
Your hearts to silence ! Your reward is near :
Though you be bound with burning thongs the
while,
That song your silent hearts alone shall hear,

Ye who would know what many men have sought,
In vain, or finding, found therein but death,
Though you are bound with thongs that fate hath
wrought,

Yet be not mutinous! Lo, every breath
You breathe is life : whereof, what mortal saith
It is a burden, his harvest falleth, sere,
Ere it be ripe. And still life uttereth
That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

Winter comes soon and swift the year grows old,
But ye whose hearts are still an hungering,
Who, sowing, reap not, but with love untold
Give all your treasure for love's offering !
The very winds shall do your garnering :
And while our harvests perish with the year,
The seed you sow shall make another spring.
That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

Ye who, desiring much, have given more !
Lo, all your harvest, on the wide air sown,
The winds that scatter shall again restore,
An hundred fold ; yea, and to you alone
Shall be the secrets of the sweet earth known,
Borne on this air, far sounding, faint and clear,
In strains that Pan upon his pipes hath blown ;
That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

Among the groves, and up the mountain, still
We follow, where you lead, with eager feet ;
Yet hear we naught, though Echo from the hill
Answer your hearts with music wondrous sweet.
But you go far, till at the last you meet
The very soul of things ; as you draw near
The world's deep joy within your hearts shall
beat.

That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

ENVOI

YE who in silence suffer for love's gain,
And swift surrender what you buy so dear,
This is your gift, which princes seek in vain,—
That song your silent hearts alone shall hear.

TO SHAKSPEARE

THY sun, circling our world from age to age,
Lighting our little moons that wax and wane,
Still blinds our eyes. Ah ! though we strive in vain
To pierce that central fire, whose fearful rage
And fierce white light beat down upon the stage,—
Thy throne, oh King,—the flames that were thy pain
Give us our life ; thy grief becomes our gain ;
And our free kingdom, this that was thy cage.

Though thou wouldst put aside thy royal crown,
Full abdication of thy throne pronounce,
Thy wonder-working wand of power put down,
With this, thy mighty magic all rencunce,
Making thyself no more than others are,
Still, in our sky, burns but one central star.

1900.

SHAKSPEARE'S SONNETS

In this thy little book, on every page—
Where, putting off thy motley, thou wouldst fain
The hidden anguish of thy heart assuage,—
Behold the secrets of thy mortal pain!
Though all the host of earth and hell engage
To fix upon thy soul a burning stain,
Still upon earth thou heaven's war dost wage,
With heavenly fire from burning tortures ta'en.

No shame of dark or daylight didst thou shun ;
Thy heart's last treasure freely didst thou spend.
Nature to thee was ne'er the veiléd nun,
Whose frail virginity thou must defend ;
She was thy mistress ; thou, her subject, still
Hast all her kingdom subject to thy will.

1900,

THE EARTH SONG

EARTH sings her song ; wherein, if any sound
Of seeming discord dwells, 'tis thus life shows
The imperfection of each thing that grows.
The sweetest fruit in all earth's garden found
Was bitter once. Born from the blackest ground,
And blooming on her thorny tree, the rose,
The fairest flower that in the garden blows,
Bears a sweet balm to heal life's deepest wound.

Though weary be our toil, our wanderings long,
At last, concealed within life's fallen fruit,
May fall some fertile seed, whereof shall shoot
Life's healing flower, to make our faint hearts strong.
The sweetest herbs have oft a bitter root,
And out of grief shall rise our sweetest song.

TO POETRY

I

THE love I bore all these to thee I bring,
And with Love's harvest in my hand I wait,
Content to kneel beside the outer gate
Of thy dear shrine. And if thou, opening
The door, shouldst bid me follow thee, and fling
My little handful in,—or soon or late,—
Lo! it is thine. To thee is consecrate
The last grain gleaned of love's own garnering.

Oh! take the gift, and open wide the door :
Pierce me with all the magic of thine eyes,
And in mine ears thy deathless music pour !
When this my heart within thy bosom lies,
But one small seed is added to thy store ;—
And thy rose-garden fills the farthest skies !

II

AH ! hard it is to win thy meed of worth,
The consecration born of service true !
The sweetest flower that e'er thy garden knew
From Life's dark bed and bosom had its birth :
And who would serve thee well upon this earth
The inmost heart of the world's life must woo,
From Life's hot blood distilling purest dew,—
Lest Love's bright arrows bring us woe and
dearth.

I fain would serve thee well, with skill in craft
To send each arrow singing to its aim.
But, oh ! that some true breath of life may waft
My words in secret ways, unknown to fame,
So that to one warm heart some slender shaft
Bear its swift message from Life's central flame.

III

CONDEMN me not that in my heart concealed
One mighty love lies hid ; nay, though thy wrath
Should stay my footsteps on thy garden path,
The seed that blows from summer's richest field
Springs where it falls : and so my heart must yield
Some scant sweet harvest for Life's aftermath ;—
Too warm to wait the winter's cold, it hath,
Within thy walls, Love's living flower revealed.

Though buried deep beneath the winter snows
Love's plant may perish not, but still persists,
And through each seeming change of life must bring
Forth seed, and increase in its kind. So grows
The mystery more strange, while Love resists
The hand of fate, and summer follows spring.

1895.

CLOSE, CLOSE MY HEART

CLOSE, close my heart within thy heart hath lain,
Some few brief days, some few sweet hours and
brief.

What fear we then of fate, that black-winged thief?
Who feeds on lifeless seeds of scattered grain,
Dead hearts, that ne'er have known love's burning
pain,

The birth of that new life, whose root and leaf
And flower and fruit are ours; yea, ours the grief
Of fallen fruit, and tears that fall like rain.

Our souls, long severed, now shall never thirst,
Since from our hearts, that long in silence sobbed,
The very blood of love and life hath burst
In one pure stream. Ah love, fate hath not robbed
Us of love's fruit, and we are not accurst,
Since deep within thy heart my heart hath throbbed.

LOVE, THE GARDENER

THY beauty was a bud of Love's true graft,
Flower-like of birth, as flooding all thy face
The quick blood rushed to meet his swift embrace,
When to thy heart, deep even to the haft
He sent his piercing blade. Oh, perfect craft!
That grievous wound hath added further grace
To beauty's self! And when he set that trace
Of tears in those deep eyes the great god laughed.

The heavenly gardener gazed into those eyes,
And in the look that lay there he hath known
His master touch, the life that is his own.
So, serving him, I too have looked where lies
Thy beauty's source, reaping, where Love hath
sown,
The heavenly harvests from his wounds that rise.

1897.

BEYOND SIGHT AND SOUND

I

SINCE I have looked on thee with eyes made clear
By love, how shall thy mortal beauty blind
Them so; that they must ever fail to find
Thy beauty's heart, or, finding it, still fear
Such naked loveliness! Nay, though thy sheer
Bright beauty's self escape me now, unkind
Fate cannot be for ever; I would bind
My strength with yearning, so to hold thee near.

Thou art, like Aphrodite from the wave
Of ocean born, a daughter of the light
And shining air. What though these lips yet rave,
Mine eyes one day may know Love's second sight!
From Death's dark shadow then these hands shall
save
Thy beauty's heart, enshrined for earth's delight.

II

CLASPED to thy heart I feel the living beat
Of blood, behold it leaping to thy fair
And perfect brow, till even the bright air
About thee seems to throb with Love's most sweet,
Most ardent fire. In passion's purest heat
Thy spirit lives; but mine thou dost ensnare
As in the meshes of thy winding hair;
And in thy breath my soul and senses meet.

With no more mighty voice sounds that great
Word,
Which even soul and spirit sundereth,
Pierced with the passing of a mystic sword.
The wordless music of thy quickening breath
Gives body to a soul; yea, hath restored
A spirit unto sense, life unto death.

A LYRIC

If grieving be love's guerdon,
Art thou then blest,
Who bearest but love's burden,
By love possessed;
Who on thy heart hast worn
This rose, with bloody thorn,
Which my poor heart hath torn, staining thy
breast!

Were love's bright sun quite vanished,
There in the West,
And all these shadows banished
At love's behest,

When all is dark around,
How should one flower be found
That falleth on the ground? Daylight is best.

When night's pale flowers are perished,
Since, on thy breast,
This rose thy heart hath cherished,
Thy hand caressed,
Still bears the crimson stain
Thy heart from mine hath ta'en
One fadeless flower in vain shall fate molest.

THROUGH NIGHTS AND DAYS

I

WHAT though by suffering risen from the ground
Into the light of air, yet did I fail
To see one glory in the world's dark trail,
Until mine eager eyes at last had found
The fire of dawn in thine; and all unbound
Thy dark hair covered thee. How shall prevail
The sun above thy praise,—or speech avail
To utter it, or song thy praise to sound!

While many silent hours my heart must wait
To hear the glory and the upward rush
Of the lark's song,—which shall at heaven's gate
Welcome the dawn, and, with the first faint flush
Of the new day, drive forth dark night and fate,—
My heart lies still beneath love's holy hush.

II

LONG, long had I my lonely watch been keeping,
With weary eyes awaiting the first spark
Of a new day; and still the nesting lark
Was silent: but, as the sad hours went creeping
Slowly by, Time, with his swift sickle reaping,
Woke me; and swiftly there thro' all the dark
I saw where joyous love hath set his mark,
Upon thy mouth;—but lo, thine eyes were weeping!

Oh, shall this darkness spread uplifting wings,
Or these dark hours that make our night so
drear

Bring forth the dawn, when we may see full near
The vision hid behind the veil of things?
Or must we perish, that we dare to peer
Too deep within life's inmost sacred springs!

III

ABOUT my heart thy wondrous hair is wound:
And wrapt in those bright bonds thy being clings
To mine; and from those heavenly strings
Which thou upon my beating heart hast bound,
All trembling in an ecstasy of sound,
Rises thy beauty's praise on love's bright wings.
So that sweet bird which in high heaven sings,
Bears my heart's burden upward from the ground.

Thy beauty in my fleeting breath shall live.
For I, who long so silent was and dumb,
Have caught the secret spell: I am become
Thy voice. Almighty Love hath grace, to give
To some swift silent joy, but grief to some,—
And a deep joy, nor dumb nor fugitive,

1899,

WHEN LOVE LAY DYING

WHEN Love lay dying, and from the world desire
Of life and all delight were vanishéd,
Since Beauty too must be earth-banishéd,
A singer laid his heart, a broken lyre,
With passion's flowers enwreathed, upon Love's
pyre.

But Beauty came—she whom Love's hand once led
Unto the double throne of Life—and said,
“Let my heart burn to feed Love's holy fire.”

Then Beauty took the singer's offerings
Ere they had perished in that fatal flame;
And wreathed her body with the flowers he gave.
Her heart burns still in that sweet song he sings
Unto the broken lyre; how Beauty came,
To die with Love,—and lived, his life to save.

THE LIFE OF THE ROSE

“The rose said, ‘I am the Yusuf Flower, for my mouth is full of gold and jewels.’ I said, ‘If thou art the Yusuf Flower, show me a certain sign thereof,’ and she made answer, ‘Perchance that I am garbed in a blood-drenched garment.’”

THE SACRED STREAM OF LIFE

YE purple flowers that maidens love so well,
What mysteries in your deep blushes dwell,
What secrets whispered in the silent night,
What hidden things ye know and may not tell !

The lily hideth nothing from the rose,
Whose inmost heart the whole wide garden knows :
Since she doth bear within her bosom white
A cruel crimson wound,—and from it flows

The sacred stream of life. So she doth mount
Love's royal colors. Nay, nor stops to count
Her loss, while you and all your sisters drink
Deep drafts of love from that immortal fount.

Ye virgin violets, would you deny
The red rose for your queen? That crimson dye
Marks you her subjects still. Ah, though you think
'Tis but for secrets of the distant sky

That maidens hold you dear, beneath that pure
Bright azure veil you wear, behold, the lure
Of love's desire doth lie. So that fair net
Of heavenly blue shall serve to make more sure

The secret spell of love. Ye maids who wear
Love's mystic purple blossoms, oh, beware!
About your hearts your well-loved violet
Hath cast love's veil and caught you unaware.

LOVE'S NET

Love's net is made of divers colors blent ;
Crimson the warp, with love's deep passion pent,
And wrapped about with fine ethereal threads
Of mystic blue, from farthest heaven sent.

A double mesh ! Ah ! fast and sure it holds
Our hearts at last. Beneath its purple folds
The joy of life with love's strange sorrow weds,
And all our grief the joy of love beholds.

Such mysteries in your sweet blossoms hide
Ye purple flowers ! When as the red rose died,
Ye violets, thou heavenly heliotrope,
How deep you mourned her ! Yet that crimson tide

Of life flows on. For you the rose hath bled ;
You are her heirs, so all the garden said.
Her love is yours, and all love's better hope,
Whose flower hath never from the garden fled.

From life's dull house though love's sweet joy doth
fly,

Swift as the day, or fate, or flowers that die,
Love's hand still holds our hearts in that strange
mesh

Which fate doth weave beneath the silent sky.

Though fate should turn our joy to mute despair,
And all the house of life grow dark and bare,
Still in the garden groweth ever fresh
That flower of love. Oh, let us seek it there !

DEATHLESS DAYS

THE House of Life were but a place of gloom
Did not that wondrous web fill every room,
Whose woof of fleeting day and night is made,
Whose warp love's hand did lay upon time's loom.

Fate plies the silent shuttle ; aye ! and yet
A mightier hand the mystic loom hath set,
That these thin threads of shifting light and shade
Should hold our throbbing hearts in one weak net.

Some souls there be, who, looking on life's wall,
Would seek to read the meaning for us all
Of sundry subtle pictures, which, they say,
Fate weaves within that fabric mystical.

And some there be who all their days have spent
In wondering how the stuff was made: they meant
To ravel out the darkness, but the day
Of love they missed,—nor knew they where it
went.

Ye maids whose hands this wondrous web do
bring!

What part is theirs who serve you still and sing
The songs first heard within your garden sweet,
Content, while your fair arms about them cling,

For some few days to lie within the net
Of your bright hair! These days may die, and yet,
Like the fair flowers that blossom at your feet,
These are the days that Death may not forget.

THE SINGER AT THE DOOR

“ THROUGH golden days Fate’s flashing shuttle flies.
In loops of light dropped from the very skies
Some threads are thrown ; and far beyond the roof
Behold the rose-trees in the garden rise!

“ All through that warp, which from the rose
tree’s root

Love spins so strong, swift doth the shuttle shoot,
And of these golden days weaving a woof
Makes a fair net to hold Life’s flower and fruit.

“ Ye maids who wait on Love, to you belong
Both fruit and flower : your tender hands are strong
To hold that net wherein my heart is caught :
Say, would ye sell it for an idle song ?

“Idle are all my songs, whom Fate immures
In this cold house. Yet all my heart is yours,
Yours the sweet flowers I had so vainly sought,—
And that one song which to the end endures.”

The voice is hushed. Loud, loud Time's loom
doth roar

Through all the house. But now,—at last,—the
door

Bursts open wide. A white hand beckons him,
And he goes forth. Hear ye the song once more?

“Oh love, though seeming dark this is not night :
Though, as we look upon this wondrous light
That makes the golden day, our eyes grow dim,
Must we then fear, or fall from Love's last height?”

THE SINGER WATCHETH

“ ARISE, ye sleepers in the house, arise !

If ye would see the light, before it flies

And in the shadow of dark yesterdays

To-day is gone where no to-morrows rise.

“ Think ye the watch without the door mistakes

An earth-born vapour for the dawn that breaks

Beyond the verge of earthly nights and days ?

Can he but dream who all the house awakes ?

“ And ye fair virgins who Love's fires do keep,

Are your lamps filled where noisome vapors creep ?

Do you in wantonness our hearts deceive ?

And must we wish we might forever sleep ?

“ Or do you keep your vigils all in vain,
Leading our lives into a tangled skein,
While blindly through the night your hands still
weave

Threads we may break but may not mend again !

“ That silken skein is spun with love’s deep skill ;
The golden bowl to the bright brim you fill.
And ere I drink this cup of earth’s pure wine
Here on sweet earth some precious drops I spill.

“ Robed in life’s garments shall I stand afraid
To touch this stuff whereof all life is made,
And shall I dare to think the weave too fine,
Or blame the Maker, though the stuff be frayed ? ”

THE WEB OF FATE

Oh ye, who ponder o'er Life's pictured wall,
Tell us the meaning of the flowers that fall,
The days that leave Love's shadow on the grass,
What say you of these songs and singers all ?

What ! When the songs and flowers are all forgot
Then you may see the visions Time hath wrought
Within these hangings wonderful ! Alas !
Wonder remains, but wisdom cometh not.

And ye who study how the stuff was made,
Whence came those colors there, so soon to fade !
If dark the web that from Time's loom doth roll
Where is the light that casts so deep a shade ?

The whole great fabric just a veil to hide
Our eyes that weep ! Is there no other side
Which Love's handmaidens see as they unroll
The web that Fate this day doth cast aside ?

Oh, tell us, thou, who serving Love dost climb,
Setting to-day above the days of Time,
What are Time's secrets then ?—With smiling lips
He singeth still a song of simple rhyme ;

And bears Fate's mystic web so high that we
May follow not, yet the whole fabric see.
The light bursts in as through the door he slips :—
But he is gone ; and gone the garden key.

THE KEY

“ I HEARD a voice; thy white hand beckoned me :
The door swung open wide. I saw no key,
But through my heart the world's untold desire
Poured like a flood as first I looked on thee.

“ I caught from thy dear lips a spell to ope
Life's farthest gates. I am content to grope :
The master-key is mine, and this strange fire
That burns shall be the light of all my hope.

“ A single thread still leads me through the maze
Love built within thy garden ; all his ways
Lead through thine eyes: how shall I fear or
doubt,
I that have known the wonder of thy gaze ?

“ Though I may never hear thy lovely name
Within these gates, it burneth as a flame
Here in my heart, and never shall die out
While flowers bloom to crown Love’s endless fame.

“ Since thou hast led me to thy secret place
Beyond the garden wall, still give me grace
To keep the golden key, lest Fate’s dread powers
Should bar me from the heaven of thy face.

“ Beyond these walls, in earth’s great wilderness,
Under some spell of deep forgetfulness
Though I be lost, let me behold the flowers
Wherein love wreaths thy wondrous loveliness.”

IN THE WILDERNESS

“ I SERVE thee only: by the living fire
That dwells among the roses of desire,
Here in the desert let me still deserve
Thy heavenly love, and ask no earthly hire!

“ Nay, though my path to life's dull house return,
This golden key the secret lock shall turn,
And I shall win once more a way to serve
Thee: yea, and love shall stranger things discern.

“ For now unto love's wondrous peace thou hast
Shown me the way. Aye, though we twain are
cast

Out from the garden, what sword is there so sharp
To part us now—or slay us at the last?

“ Though none may break the threads whereof the
weft

Of fate is woven, yet are we not bereft ;

For who shall break the thread of love's strong
warp,

Or change that look love in thine eyes has left ?

“ Love made thy hands upon Time's loom to tend,

Thine eyes behold Love's weaving hath no end,

And though our lives be hither thither tost

Love gave thee skill his subtle thread to mend.

“ Oh love, were life a wilderness of sin,

One thread still leadeth to the shrine within,

Wreathed all in roses that the years had lost,

And violets to veil love's sorrows in.”

BY THIS LAST DOOR

“ By this last door, where still I stand and grope,
I found a budding spray of heliotrope :
And here I wait, for here or late or soon,
Thy hand shall pluck that fragrant flower of hope.

“ Like to this flower thy heart still constant turns
Unto love's sun, whose rosy daybreak burns
All day ; and in the lingering afternoon,
Lo, to her purple throne love's rose returns.

“ Borne on the shining wheels of time and change
High noon hath gone: here on the heights we
range,
And far below, a soul bewildering sight,
Our life's fair garden lies, a vision strange.

“How the swift shadows lengthen, love! Yet see,
The falling shades unfold more mystery,
Till, through their shifting bars of broken light,
Gleams the full length of Time’s great tapestry.

“Our day slips by: the sun’s far slanting rays
Throw deeper shade: but to our wondering gaze
How clear the vision of the garden there
As through the dark’ning hours we walk love’s
maze!

“That thread which in the garden first I found,
And followed, groping blindly o’er the ground,
Swift as the night leaps through the breathless air,
A line of light, that knows no bar nor bound.”

THE BLOOD OF THE ROSE

“ WHEN the swift day is gone, hope’s distant star
Shines through the dark: and must we, borne so
far

On the dark wings of love’s unuttered woes,
Hover, still hopeless, here at heaven’s bar!

“ When that our shadows, lengthening, confuse
The threads of love and fate; when fate doth bruise
Our hearts upon Time’s loom, and very love
Brings us to fear, the way how shall I choose?

“ From thy sweet lips half parted in surprise,
And the strange light within those silent eyes,
Fear came to me, but now they shall reprove
My faltering heart and teach me to be wise.

“The light that was must ever be my guide,
And lead me still far up the mountain side,
By winding paths to win life’s perilous slope,
And that last height, where joy and peace abide.

“When the day dieth, ere the sun is set
And joy and sorrow merge, behold there yet
Doth glow the wondrous light of love’s great hope;—
And all the earth is robed in violet.

“So earth must mourn the day! But overhead
The fading sky swift turns a rosy red:—
And heaven blooms with that incarnate rose
Which in love’s garden for love’s sake hath bled.”



THE LIFE SPIRIT

“ And from the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form and doth the body make.”

“ For earth that gives the milk the spirit gives.”

WHOSE is the finger that gives form

To everything that lives ?

Whose mystic touch turns dark earth's dust

To Beauty's flesh and blood ?

Whose is the mind that made the Word

By which a thought may live,

Whose subtle breath shall make a child

The prophet of all time ?

Whose is the hand that marks the hours

With the sharp knife of Time,

And with our lives doth measure out

The life of Time himself ?

What is the force of awful change

That brings sweet Life to death,
And gently then, raising Death's veil,
Hints larger life within?
Thy scarce seen footsteps mark the path
To earth's own Paradise,
Thy heart-beat sounds the melody
And measure of Life's song!
Still let me ever live to be
A servant at thy shrine,
Kissing the feet that lead me on,
The hand that bears the knife,
Till, with my head close to thy heart,
I catch the cadence deep, divine,
Of earth's immortal strain.

TO F. T.

How often, dear, since first our spirits met,
But still in vain, my hand has tried to trace
One living line of all the mystic grace
And beauty that is thine! And I must yet
Abide the time when I shall pay that debt
Which I have owed to time since thine embrace
First freed me from his hand, and in thy face
I saw that light whose sun doth never set.

Blesséd the day when first I caught just one
Dear look of thine, such as thy spirit fleet
Clothes thee withal, as with the golden glow
Of Love's far speeding but still constant sun.
I am borne onward;—till mine eyes shall greet
The whole wide vision that my heart doth know.

IN FRENCH FORMS

MY RUSTIC MUSE

My rustic Muse, all rough and slow
Doth like some heavy creature go :
Turneth like ox before the plough,
And down beneath the yoke doth bow,
Of fine French form and furbelow.

Sweet Muse! Still turn thy rough furrow.
A god perchance the seed shall sow,
Whence some good thing may come, I trow,
My rustic Muse!

Out of dull earth bright flowers grow ;
In the full harvest thou dost know,

With what loud songs of gladness now
The wains go rumbling to the mow
Where sweetest grasses overflow ;
My rustic Muse !

FOR YOU AND ME

For you and me a happy lot
Had been some little house, a plot
Of pleasant flowers, and a wall
Where vines should grow, and lizards crawl
When summer suns beat down full hot.

There had we lived, and never sought
To see beyond, and sighed for naught:
No need of noble house nor hall
For you and me.

If now beyond or crib or cot
Our house be grown, sure, I know not
Why griefs should grow, or pleasures pall,
Because the roof-tree is so tall,
Or hearts become less warm, God wot,
For you and me !

YOU WHISPERED, LOVE

You whispered, love! in just one word,
Secrets I long had passed unheard,
Faint breathed within your garden close
Far borne by each wild wind that blows,
While I lived on with hopes deferred.

Long years in this cold heart interred
Lay one deep mystery unstirred,—
“As summer under winter’s snows,”
You whispered, love.

You breathed upon me, and I heard
The burden sung of Love’s sweet bird;
The secret of the budding rose
Was mine: the rest—no mortal knows.
You whispered,—“Love!”

UNDER THE SUN

UNDER the sun these roses grew,
Whose falling petals now bestrew
The garden path. And must we fear
The winds that blow shall interfere
And change our roses into rue ?

Close round my heart love's whirlwind blew
These dying rose leaves :—but for you
They still were lying brown and sere
Under the sun.

Ah, Love shall make a wondrous brew
Of bruised flowers : 'tis the dew
Love's night distils, each drop a tear,
Then many roses far more dear ;
What then, love, though there's nothing new
Under the sun !

GIVE US MORE LIFE

GIVE us more life ! Our blood grows thin,
Until we fear, like shapes of sin,
Our very shadows, as they lie
Upon the path ; in vain we sigh
For the brave days that once have been.

We shut the door, and there, within,
We wait for wonders to begin,
And light our little lamps, and cry,
“ Give us more life ! ”

But push the door ; aye, make it spin,
And face the sunlight entering in !
Behind us now the shadows fly,
No fear that life will pass us by
As we go forth, fresh fields to win !
Give us more life !

LOVE'S BLIND EYES

ALL ye who would be great and wise,
How may joys ye had not missed,
Had ye but seen with Love's blind eyes!

But "joy possessed for ever flies!"
On such vile doctrines you insist,
All ye who would be great and wise.

Ye slay the hours as they arise;
Cold are the lips ye should have kissed,
Had ye but seen with Love's blind eyes.

Slain by the spirit that denies,
Love leaves you blind indeed. Oh, list,
All ye who would be great and wise!

When ^wdays are dark and daylight dies,
Ye were not wand'ring in the mist,
Had ye but seen with Love's blind eyes.

Your blindness lacks Love's swift surmise;
Ye come too late to Life's high tryst,
All ye who *would* be great and wise,
Had ye but seen with Love's blind eyes.

THE SUN OF LOVE

SINCE love's blind eyes have pierced that veil
Which parted thy dear life from mine,
The sun of love shall never fail.

From out the flame of passion's pale
White heat a living light doth shine,
Since love's blind eyes have pierced that veil.

Beneath this light must still prevail
Earth's inmost fire. Lo! by this sign
The sun of love shall never fail.

Why must we seek some mystic Grail,
And shun the cup of earth's pure wine,
Since love's blind eyes have pierced that veil

Which like a darkening cloud did trail

Sometime between my soul and thine ?

The sun of love shall never fail,

For now among our senses frail

Hath grown some sense almost divine;—

Since love's blind eyes have pierced that veil

The sun of love shall never fail !

A GARLAND FOR FAME

In this garden, I made for mine own
A garland for fame : ah, but pray
Who shall care for these flowers I have sown ?

When my blossoms in beauty be grown,
Will Beauty's sweet self ever stray
In this garden I made for mine own ?

Must I wander for ever alone,
Will delight then for ever delay ?
Who shall care for these flowers I have sown ?

All these flowers of fame, overblown,
Let them lie, to show Beauty her way
In this garden I made for mine own.

For she hath all my heart for her throne ;
Though my flowers for her sake should decay,
Who shall care ? For these flowers *I* have sown.

All my garlands of roses I lay
At her feet. She is mine :—and one day
In this garden I made for mine own,
She will care for these flowers I have sown.



TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THOU spirit strong, who late in English ships
Didst bear our English tongue to the last reach
Of this world's farthest sea, thou hast for each
Live man of us pushed back the line where slips
This self into the dark, as the sun dips
Into the sea ; and set on that far beach
A brave new standard for our English speech :—
Or sounds the old so new upon thy lips !

Like men of old, deep hast thou gazed within
Thy soul ; aye ! deep within that fatal urn
Where souls of men are made, where toss and spin
The leaves of destiny. Yet thine eyes turn
To us at last as with a child's calm gaze ;
And little children wait on all thy ways.

IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(The Light-House Builder's Son)

BEHOLD ! a tower of light ! where stood before
The flickering flame that led our fathers home.
Then shall there be, upon the sea, no more
Of faith in heaven's fires ; shall froth and foam
And misty cloud for ever from our sight
Conceal the stars and hide their heavenly light ?

Born of the blood of them who builded higher
The house of light upon the homeward shore,
Comes one with eyes far fixed upon that fire
Which beckons ever on the deep ; once more
On seas unknown we sail, while he beguiles
Our hearts with words of new-found fairy isles.

And so with him upon the sea's bright strand,
Forgetful of the tide and of the wave,
Like children there we builded on the sand
Our cherished treasure houses. Ah ! how brave
That heart ! As with the courage of a child
He led us on, and all our hearts beguiled.

He takes us boldly past the harbor bar,
And floating through the reefs and round the shoals,
He shows us where the wrecks of winter are,
All through the summer seas ; and where men's
souls
Lie wrecked, he steers straight on, through darkest
night
And starless skies, led by an inward light.

No wandering fire he follows. Nay ! that heart
Turns like a compass to life's constant source.

Though danger threaten us on every part,
And sun and stars should fail, the secret force
That fills the world with light and life and love
Holds true his heart, which tempests may not move.
Fate's wheel, just touched, moves hidden chains
that rule

The lives of men ! Our captain owns no whip
But strength in gentleness. If some poor fool
Be rashly mutinous,—as on our ship,
Alas ! so many are,—each foolish heart
He chides, unrolling wide life's fateful chart.

Gladly we give him service. Let us keep
This last long watch with him ! The night is come,
The sails are set upon an unknown deep.
That light which led us outward from the home
Our fathers made he ne'er may see again :—
But he hath set new fires within the hearts of men !

Well may we bear him tribute. Golden sails
Take forth our treasure to the sunset sea.
The strong sweet wind that swells them never fails,
And with a braver faith, our hearts shall be
Upborne by that pure breath which in his words
Still lives, as on great seawinds soar the gray-
winged birds.

TO A LAUREATE OF EMPIRE

You sing to us the song of steam,
And true romance ; our world is yours :
You draw things as they seem ;
What know we if the dream
Dies or endures ?

You set forth with the rising sun,
And watched your brothers as they wrought ;
So they may read who run
You told of work well done,
Battles well fought.

On every little thing and dear
You set the mark of true romance :

And wondrous true and clear
The forms of things appear
To your quick glance.

Out of the sunrise in the East
You came and made our dreams come true ;
And made us, great and least,
Each man and boy, and beast,
All friends to you,

We lived those dreams you made so real,
Those songs of yours we long had sung :
Our very hearts you steal ;
What then ! You made us feel
The world is young.

The world is young. You found it out
While others swore 'twas sick and cold ;

Our faith no man shall flout ;

The things we care about

Are never old !

.

When in old jars you poured new wine,

Though it was strong, we did not shrink,

Unto our royal line,

And all our rights divine,

Long life to drink.

We dreamed the world was ours ; that draught

Swift made it so—as in our vision.

The cup of blood we quaffed,

And at the whole world laughed

With wild derision.

The Lord of Hosts was with us still ;—

Let pagans worship wandering Pan ;—

So we, by His good will
The heathen slew ;—we kill
For the Great Plan !

We bade them turn and kiss the rod,
Forget their passion and their panic,
Forget they were downtrod :
Nor see in our great God
A Thing mechanic.

.
Were your romance then but a mist
To veil from us God's law and love,
'Twere better you had missed
The mark ; nay, in the list
Ne'er thrown your glove.

Oh, better had our hands but shook,
And spilled the wine ! Not now with laughter,

But through our tears we look,
Deep, deep within Life's book,
Before and after.

Think you we have not understood
The spirit of your spoken word ?
We know the wine is good :
Being our very blood,
That you so stirred.

The wine is pure ; but in the jar
Were left the old wine's bitter lees,
Whose bitterness shall mar
The vintage new, while war
Still taints the seas.

And since our war may never cease,
Shall we not make new bottles then,

Wherein the years of peace
Shall pour the Earth's increase
Of joy for men ?

You praise our work ; why then we'll pray
For power to make, and better mould,
New jars of sweet earth's clay,
Those others put away,
Men made of old.

FULFILMENT

THOU living God! We know Thou art
Within each truly humble heart:
We know Thou dost not dwell apart

From perfect Love. Thy great love hath
Shown us Thy wisdom's better path;—
How shall we hope to stay Thy wrath!

Hast Thou our brother's pleading heard,
Since in our hearts the ancient word
Of sacrifice hath once more stirred?

Had we forgot all pride of birth,
Our offering were better worth
Than Kingship over sea and earth.

When did'st Thou give dominion, Lord?
When gav'st us Thine almighty sword,
Which we have seemingly restored?

We know Thou gavest length of days,
Freedom to walk along the ways
Of Thine own love,—and for Thy praise.

We know, O Lord, the passing hours
Thine angels are, with awful powers
To make Thy life at one with ours.

Yet spare us, Lord! if through the din
Of wasteful wars we fail to win
The way Thy wisdom leads us in.

Thy fear hath shaken hands that reek
With brother's blood, and still would seek
To hold their birthright from the meek.

Once more to us a voice is sent,
Crying from out the wild, "Repent!"
"Repent!" and evermore "Repent!"

Ah! to repent were mere remorse,
Without Thy Love. A water course
May rise no higher than its source.

Without thy law of Love, Oh God!
Well may we bend beneath the rod,
Yea! bow our foreheads to the sod.

Ye sons of Abraham's true seed,
Beware! the boast of blood and breed
Shall fail you in your utmost need.

Up from these very stones shall rise
True sons of God. Beneath these skies
There is one only sacrifice.

Hath He been offered up in vain,
That Holy One? Or was He slain
Indeed? Shall Christ not come again?

Have we forgot? Shall we forget
His law of love? Oh! live we yet
Under the law of blood and sweat?

Thou God of Love! Be with us still!
Maker of worlds! Make Thou our will
At one with Thine. Thy law fulfil!

Sept., 1897.

“NOT PEACE, BUT A SWORD!”

I

DE PROFUNDIS

ONCE, the world stood still in wonder,
Heard a voice amid the thunder,
Saw the veil was rent asunder.

When that bitter cup was taken,
When to life the dead did waken,
Was this living world forsaken?

Daylight comes. But dark disaster
Falls upon us fast and faster,
While we still deny the Master.

Oh, that ancient awful blunder !
Shall we rend His robe asunder,
Mark the whole fair world for plunder ?

“Lo, our Brother, he hath worn it,

“But these others, they have torn it,

“And shall we forbear, or scorn it ?

“Earth is ours, aye, all upon it.

“Lo, His robe, by lot we won it !”

Shall we slay the love that spun it ?

.

Blood upon the world lies reeking,

Tongues unknown we still are speaking,

Truth comes not for all our seeking.

.

Are we still our brother selling

To the death ? Shall love's upwelling

Soul still find no earthly dwelling ?

What ! Are we but beings fated,

On a dying world belated,

Still to hate as we are hated ?

Time moves on, the silent reaper,
Shall the mark of Cain grow deeper ;
Am I not my brother's keeper ?

Shall a selfish generation
Sell our hope, our faith, our Nation,
And escape Time's condemnation ?

II

SURSUM CORDA

MENACED now by many dangers,
At our gates the hordes of strangers,
And within, the money-changers ;

While we yield to compromises,
Blinded by the old devices,
By the smoke of " sacrifices ; "

Is our Freedom's temple shaken ?
Ere that bitter cup be taken,
Rouse ye hearts, ye people waken !

.
Though the world of nations fear us,
Though the Lord of battles hear us,
May the God of Love be near us !

Freedom ! Thou, our common mother,
Lead us still ; oh, let no other
Guide be ours against a brother !

Nay ! Though nations fall asunder,
In that voice amid the thunder,
Love reveals a growing wonder.

And that awful scourge still scourges ;
From the world's deep soul there surges
Fire, that all the temple purges.

1898—9.

OUR SHIP OF STATE

THEY said we were adrift; our ship a raft
Built up of broken masts and rotten spars,
Flotsam from all the wrecks of all the seas
That wash the chainéd shores of this wide world;
And we, we but the jetsam, and the jest
Of all the nations !

But he laughs best
Who, in the end, late and at last has laughed;
Yea, wounded sore, yet dares to smile at scars.
Beneath some jests lie deepest verities:
Confess, we drifted then! How else, when hurled
About by war's fierce winds, by storm sore pressed,
Had we still held our course !

Be it confessed

No chart was ours, all rudderless our craft !
Straight on we bore, beneath the guiding stars,
With the deep stream, biding no favouring breeze ;
While, at our side, where backward eddies whirled,
Strong ships were sinking that we saw distressed,
Their rudders fixed.

But we, on Freedom's quest,
Just saving them that leaped, and freely quaffed
The sea's strong salty stream, caught a few spars,
And lashed them by our side, that so might these
Find footing with us. As the eddy swirled
Above their ships, the ocean's heaving breast
Still bore us up and on.

Now, watch we lest
The many by mere weight, the few by craft

Shall sink us yet ; or lest,—to fill our jars
From fresher streams, in some false port of peace,
Anchored too long,—our ship be downward hurled
By some old infamy, set forth new dressed
In Freedom's stolen garb!

Since he laughs best
Who laughs the last, what though we still had
laughed
Through storm and stress, shall we do so when wars
And strife are done? Nay, shall our strife e'er
cease?

Must we be bound with chains of gold, impearled,
To grin at some new tyranny's behest?
Or shall we seek new freedom?

For us no rest ;
Ceaseless our vigils; nay, the very draught
Of life we drink comes salty from the jars,

Which stand unsealed, lest someone thirst. What

ease

Shall be for them who seek that unknown world,—

No fairy land, no Island of the Blest,—

Where perfect Freedom reigns ?

Ah! though our quest

Quite hopeless seems, helpless and frail our craft,

Freedom's true sons shall see new avatars

Walk on before them, o'er the stormy seas,

With Lincoln, whose sad lips, unfearing, curled

In smiles midmost the storm. Fear, fear not lest

The Leader shall be lacking !

Time be our test,

Whose proof is this, that who laughs last laughs

best ;

And Truth, which dwells oftentimes beneath a jest !

A SONG OF FREEDOM

I

TO FREEMEN OVER ALL THE EARTH

Lo, you are all my children ; nor forget
To take your birthright, ye who were begotten
To bear the burden of that heavy debt,
Not easy to be borne, nor soon forgotten.

For this is yours, his birthright to restore
Unto your weaker brother. Though dark deceit
Did blind your father's eyes, 'tis night no more,
But yours the burden of the day's full heat.

In that dawn's light, ye seed of Israel,
Shun ye your father's father's penalty ;
Strike hands in peace with sons of Ishmael,—
Since none, or all together, shall go free !

Face ye the light ! Look, through the coming
years

Sweeps o'er the world my universal flood !

There are no hills to climb till the sky clears ;—

And still the waters bear the stain of blood.

II

TO THE BRITISH

YE who go forth upon my mighty deep,
Whereon no ship men make for long shall float,
Be strong to swim, when my great billows sweep
In swirling eddies round your riven boat.

How shall you lean upon your ancient laws,
Of such frail timber hope to build some Ark,
That shall endure ! So should you clutch at straws,
As drowning men who perish in the dark.

III

TO THE BOERS

AND ye, who sit where still your fathers sat,
And build your houses on a heap of sand,—
To your dim eyes another Ararat !
How long think you your little hill shall stand ?
What! Would you strive to stay great Freedom's
flood,
Which riseth still,—with that resistless force
That makes the warm heart beat, the bare tree
bud,—
Like living sap that springs from Life's deep
source?

IV

TO BRITON AND BOER, IN BATTLE

RESISTLESSLY! What, then without remorse
Shall this flood rise? And shall no heavenly dove

Bring forth some branch of peace? From that
great source

Whence freedom springs, flows there no fount of
Love?

V

TO BRITONS ON ALL THE SEAS

THE seas are yours! Then will you bid them
fall?

Nay, though they sink with every ebbing tide,
How sure, how swift that slow recessional
Riseth resistless, in great freedom's pride!

As the old ocean's backward waters creep,
To gain new strength, and only fall, to rise;
As your strong youth prepareth for the leap,
So, with loin girt, seek freedom for your prize.

Let no hypocrisy be yours ! What need
Have I then to repent ? What to restore ?
This writing on the wall let freemen read !
"To him who hath shall yet be given more."

VI

TO FREEMEN IN EVERY LAND

Lo, for my sake poured out, your father's blood
Riseth in you to make your children free ;
And you must venture forth on life's great flood
Though wrecks and reefs should threaten all the
sea.

Aye, let your harvests in that swelling tide
Be swallowed up ; and you shall see, full sure,
Your cities of their mire all purified !
The flood is on. See that ye keep it pure !

So unto ye, baptized in freedom's faith,
Who, in my purifying sea immersed,
Bear one another up, shall come no scathe ;
Yea, though the sea be salt, ye shall not thirst.

SOWING

FULL slow

Comes up each seed you sow :

Before you reap

Long, long the seed must sleep.

And yet,

Not all in quiet peace

Comes increase.

There is no thing alive

Which doth not strive :

And still you pay life's debt

With toil and sweat.

Full many seeds you sow,

Few grow.

And those you plant too deep
You shall not reap,
But earth shall keep.

Yet these shall not all die,
But lie
Until they find a way
Unto the light of day.

And for yourselves
Only, you do not sow ;
For him who delves
Hereafter your seed shall grow.

For some other
Still you sow,
For some brother
You do not know.

How shall you know

What word of all your creeds,

Filling some future needs,

Shall be sure

To endure?

What one of all your seeds

Shall thrive among the weeds,

Strong, and pure?

You know the earth is kindly

And plant your seeds;

And then, but oh how blindly,

You pull the weeds!

Then beware!

Ye that do till the soil,

With daily care and toil,

That every cherished seed

Shall bring forth fruit that you may feed;

Whose fear is for the morrow
Of famine and of need!
Forbear!
Yea, guard ye, in your greed,
Against a greater sorrow,
Lest, tearing up some weed
That may annoy,
You so destroy
Some hidden hope, some unseen root,
From whence had grown,
Hereafter,
Such wondrous fruit
As hand of man
Hath never sown,
Since time began.

What though you still were foiled
In that for which you toiled?

What though you labored still in grief ?

'Twere not in vain !

Nay, in some late gleaned sheaf

Of golden grain,

There may be found

Some simple blossom bound,

Whose balm shall bring relie

For all your pain.

A FRAGMENT

Out from the garden where the birds still sing,
Where beauty dwells among the budding roses
And nodding poppy flowers that swiftly bring
Their sleep upon us when the bright day closes—
I am called forth. As in a dream I go
To join that host who on the river's brink
Worship the sacred stream. I may not know
What measure is for me ;—nor shall I shrink.
I fall upon the shore, and with my hand
Make me a cup, and dip it in and drink
To quench this burning thirst. Now on the
strand,
With steadfast gaze bent on that sacred stream,

Comes one who holds a glass, wherefrom white
sand

And black commingled runs, whose dull grains
seem,

Like falling seeds, to quicken with the birth

Of coming life ;—and now it is no dream !

For this grey sand, mixed with the moist sweet earth

That banks the river up, brings forth rare flowers,

And far along the shore, where all was dearth,

A garden blooms : and fresh as morning hours

And young as youth, goes forth upon the grass

That shining one, who pours unceasing showers

Of sand, both white and black, from a full glass ;—

Whose name is Time.

.

FORM AND FREEDOM

THESE banks that bind Life's current to our use,
Oh tread them lightly ye that come to slake
Your thirst therein ! But one false step you take,
And more than life in that full flood you lose.

Though these hard bonds my very heart may bruise,
Not for my life would I too lightly break
The bonds this world hath made for freedom's sake,
Nor yet my vows to serve a jealous muse.

Then shall I dare in my frail skiff to skim
Upon that flood where they shall scarce endure
Who sail in mighty ships, well built, secure
From flood and fire ? Lo, from the river's brim
I launch my boat. What though I sink or swim ?
On with the stream I go, full fast, full sure.

LOVE AND LIBERTY

THE gift of freedom lies within Love's dole !

Who knows not Love may play some active part,

May seemingly fill up, with anxious art,

A place in Life's great scene, and take this rôle

Or that as chance shall serve. Ah ! how the whole

Great world grows near and real since the swift

smart

Of heavenly fire first pierced within my heart,

And Love delivered me from Fate's control.

Fate's linked chains fall off as I confess

Me here a willing slave to Love. Behold !

Thy bonds I bear. But while thine arms enfold

Me close to thy warm heart, lo, I possess

Myself in thee. Thy love hath made me bold ;

And perfect freedom lies in thy caress.

THE WHITE GODS

OH ye white gods, who far above us bask
In the sun's fire, your altars now are cold ;
And when we stand before you, and make bold,
From out the burning of our hearts to ask,
Why we poor mortals still must bear our task,
Toiling on earth, ye answer, as of old,
“ Fate rules alone.” So ye yourselves withhold,
Hiding your faces, as behind a mask.

Why should we worship you, or call you great ;—
Or seek to drag you down, who dwell so far
Above our battle? Nay, or soon or late,
All passion-torn and mortal as we are,
We stand beside you—we, who with black fate,
Whom ye do fear, wage our eternal war.

VENUS VICTRIX

WHEN many years are gone of drought and dearth,
Shalt thou not struggle to the light again
From forth our mighty mother's womb? And when,
Lying like us upon the lap of earth,
We know thee daughter of our common birth,
But beautiful, and free, how shall we then
Still fear that chain, by which thou bindest men,
Thy girdle woven of all woe and mirth?

And when from out thine opening eyes doth peer
The wonder of all life, and through thy form
Surgeth the sea of earthly passions' storm,
Then shalt thou draw us to thy heart full near;
No shame of ours thy beauty shall deform,
And we, bound in thy toils, shall hold them dear.

TO "THE VENUS OF MILO"

(VENUS GENETRIX)

WE dare not hope to reach thy lofty place,
Nor with dark Fate to be quite reconciled.
Thy seeming sightless eyes, benignly mild
As of the early gods, or of some race
Of men almost divine, look into space
Beyond our mortal vision ; with no wild
Swift passion torn, so hast thou ever smiled—
Great love immortal lighting thy calm face,

Born of the womb of earth, who doth beguile
Both gods and men to woo her, for all time
Thou art a thing of worship. Ah, sublime
Mother of men ! We may not reconcile
The darkness with the dream ; yet still we climb
The starlit heights to win thy sacred smile,

AN EPILOGUE

I

You bid me sing you as I cull these flowers

Some simple song, and gay.

Yet the world's fashion would forbear to scorn

The rose I bring for that it bears a thorn.

Nor would my song forsooth then be forsworn,

Did I but mourn,

In simple sorrow,

Seeing these blossoms that I cull to-day

Must wither ere to-morrow,

And in the passing of a few short hours

From earth and from all mortal memory

Pass quite away.

II

But who am I, to lay on Beauty's grave
Dead roses of regret;
Seeing that one small seed,
Which her white hand hath dropped upon the
earth,
May come to life again some day, somewhere;
And, springing from that sacred secret birth,
New flowers of Beauty's breed
Shall blossom on the fragrant air!
Shall I forget, though Beauty sleeping lies,
Love hath such subtle art,
And Life such mighty power to save
The very fragrance of each thing that's fair,
The very life that Beauty's hand first gave,
Which Love, within her brooding heart
And in her dreaming eyes,
Shall evermore beget!

FIRE AND DEW

Pour forth the wine ! Let the bright bowl be filled
With earth's pure fire ! Pour yet again ; yea, pour
Until the burning, brimming cup run o'er !
What though some drops of very life be spilled .
From this rose - wreathed, fire - crownéd cup ?

Distilled

In fragrant dew shall they not fall once more
Back to the earth, to quicken and restore
The thirsty soil, that life shall be fulfilled !

So do we mix pure water with pure wine ;
And life, which first was born of living fire,
Finds in the falling dew a second birth.

And so, amidst the ashes of this earth,
May Beauty bear some breed of pure desire,—
And breathe new life through these dead words of
mine.



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